

Results of a monitoring project on the Urdu Service of All India Radio (September and October 2018)

by Dr Hansjoerg Biener

{NB: All times are in UTC, ie IST (Indian Standard Time) -5.5 hours. Alan}

The Urdu Service of All India Radio (ID “Ye All India Radio (ki Urdu Service) he”) started broadcasting on AM on 15 May 1965. In 2013, it was the first AIR channel to go online alongside Hindi FM Gold. Although the service was started as an external service, there is a large Urdu speaking population in North India too. It is said, that the online/DTH/mobile presence lead to an increase of listening in India itself.

The Urdu Service has the following online schedule:

•0025-1930 UTC (0555-0100 IST)

At <https://gsl.net/vu2jos/>, Jose Jacobs gives this schedule for the Urdu external service on medium and short wave.

Morning Service 0025-0430 UTC (0555-1000 IST)

- 0025-0430 UTC: 702 kHz (Jalandhar) 6140 kHz (Aligarh) 7340 kHz (Mumbai) 7520 kHz (Khampur)
- 0025-0100: 1071 kHz (Rajkot)
- 0200-0430: 1071 kHz (Rajkot)
- 0630-0815 [!]: 1071 kHz (Rajkot)

Special Service during Haj season

- 0530-0600 UTC: 11670 kHz (Bengaluru) 15210 kHz (Panaji)

Afternoon Service 0830-1130 UTC (1400-1700 IST)

- 0830-1130: 702 kHz (Jalandhar) 7250 kHz (Kingsway) 7340 kHz (Mumbai) 9620 kHz (Aligarh) 9940 kHz (Kingsway) 11560 kHz (Khampur)
- 0830-1230 [!]: 1071 kHz (Rajkot)
- 0830-1430 [!]: 7520 kHz (Khampur)

Night Service 1430-1930 UTC (2000-0100 IST)

- 1430-1930: 702 kHz (Jalandhar) 7520 kHz (Khampur)
- 1600-1930: 1071 kHz (Rajkot)

Because there is a constant reference to “medium wave”, “short wave” and “kHz”, it is highly probable that the service is carried on AM frequencies whenever they are available. (I remember from earlier years that I always had 7520 kHz in parallel to the online stream. Unfortunately, I never heard this frequency when checked during this monitoring period.)

The Urdu stream is completely separate from all the other online streams. In contrast to the other online streams, the Urdu Service does not take any central news in English or Hindi, even less any other Indian language. It did not participate in joint programmes monitored on several occasions on other streams nor did it join in the running commentaries of the Cricket Asia Cup (15–28 September 2018). In sharp contrast to most other online streams, where speakers at

times used English words, terms and phrases in their regular speech, the Urdu Service followed an Urdu only policy. The only English heard during weeks of the monitoring was on 8 October, a repeat broadcast of a function on the occasion of the first External Services Day, 1 October 2018.

News, commentary and many, if not most programmes are preceded and followed by the announcement of the different platforms (“medium wave”, “short wave”, “FM”, “DTH”, “internet”) the Urdu Service is carried on. There are talks/lectures of the learned, music features and radio plays (not as many as in other online streams). Although I tried to establish a general line-up of the programmes by listening in on as many days as possible, there will certainly be differences from week day to week day. Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birth anniversary on 2 October may or may have not produced some additional schedule changes in the scheduled programming. On some other language streams the Durga Puja was an important event too.

It seems that the music programmes are exclusively devoted to traditional/classical/religious music, to older film music or popular recent tracks respectively. South Asian music follows a tonal system different from Western music. Much of the traditional music sounds very foreign to (my) European ears. Older film music is characterised by especially high pitched female voices, laughter, copy of Western (Italian, Spanish) tunes (e. g. „che sera“) and rhythms (cha-cha and other Latin rhythms). Some more recent film tracks are more rock-oriented. On the other hand, some music might not be film music at all.

For the non-speaker of Urdu, the situation becomes even more difficult when it comes to the spoken programmes. The newscasts may offer familiar names of persons or places. The news are announced as something like “K’habaron”, but I think I also heard “Samachar”, which is familiar from many other language streams at <http://allindiaradio.gov.in/Default.aspx>. The Urdu Service carries the following newscasts:

Morning Service 0025-0430 UTC (0555-1000 IST)

- 0045-0055 (0615 IST)
- 0400-0403 (0930 IST)

Afternoon Service 0830-1130 UTC (1400-1700 IST)

- 0832-0837 (1402 IST)
- 1120-1130 (1650 IST)

Night Service 1430-1930 UTC (2000-0100 IST)

- 1430-1440 UTC (2000 IST)
- 1615-1625 (2145 IST)
- 1730-1740 (2300 IST)
- 1925-1930 (0055 IST)

Given the fact, that no other news programmes are scheduled, the times look very odd. At first glance, it seems more listener friendly to schedule news on the full or half hour every hour or every second hour. However, if you correlate the news times with the beginning and end of the three main AM broadcast blocks of the day, the scheduling makes some sense. A final note on the news: <http://www.newsonair.com/News-Schedules.aspx> lists three centrally prepared newscasts at 0850-0905, 1350-1400 and 2115-2125 IST (0320-0335, 0820-0830, 1546-1555 UTC, actually 1600 h? to be discussed when reporting on Radio Kashmir). These Urdu newscasts are not taken by the Urdu Service, but (possibly produced and) broadcast by Radio Kashmir.

The broadcast day starts at about 0023 with the familiar Interval Signal of All India Radio and traditional/religious music. It precedes and follows the 0045-0055 (0615 IST) News in Urdu until 0200 UTC. It is only with the rising day that the music style becomes more modern. The next newscast is at 0400-0403 (0930 IST). The first hours of the day also feature some spoken segments, but I was unable to establish a reliable schedule.

It is easier to describe the final hours of the broadcast day.

- 1600-1615: film music
- 1615-1625: news in Urdu (2145 IST)
- 1625-1630: Aaj ki Baat (commentary)
- 1630-1700: different mainly talk programmes, also radio drama
- 1700-1730: old music
- 1730-1740: news in Urdu (2300 IST)
- 1740-1800: film music
- 1800-1900: traditional music
- 1900-1925: film music
- 1925-1930: news in Urdu (0055 IST)
- 1930: Ye Hind and close down

Dr Hansjoerg Biener 17 October 2018